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Missions Created and Sustained by Prophecy.

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S E R M O N ,

BEFORE THE

AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS,

AT THEIR

MEETING IN PITTSBURG, PENN.

OCTOBER 5, 1869.

BY

REV. JOHN TODD, D. D.

Pastor of the First Church, Pittsfield, Mass.

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AMERICAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS.

PITTSBURG, PENN., OCTOBER, 1869.

Resolved, That the thanks of the Board be presented to the Rev. Dr. TODD, for his Sermon preached Tuesday evening, and that he be requested to furnish a copy for publication.

Attest,

JOHN O. MEANS, *Rec. Secretary*.

S E R M O N .

MALACHI 1. 11.

FOR FROM THE RISING OF THE SUN EVEN UNTO THE GOING DOWN OF THE SAME,
MY NAME SHALL BE GREAT AMONG THE GENTILES; AND IN EVERY PLACE
INCENSE SHALL BE OFFERED UNTO MY NAME, AND A PURE OFFERING; FOR
MY NAME SHALL BE GREAT AMONG THE HEATHEN, SAITH THE LORD OF
HOSTS.

OUR conceptions, and our language, concerning religion, are, for the most part, clothed in the drapery of the Jewish Church. We embalm most of her imagery in our worship, so that "we walk about Zion," we sing and pray in "the gates of Zion," or we go to "the mercy seat," and not only enthrone "Jerusalem" as the centre of earth's history, but expect to find a "New Jerusalem" in heaven. When we read of the future triumphs of religion, we see "altars" erected, and "incense" rising up, and making their appeals to the mercy of God, from every place on his footstool, or, as our text expresses it, "from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same." Is this Jewish drapery preserved in the New Testament, and thrown over the Church in all ages, in order that when the people of God, from all "nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues," shall meet in heaven, we shall have no feeling of strangeness, having in all our pilgrimage sung and prayed in the same language, using the same imagery?

You will notice that the language of the text is guarded, as well as full. It does not promise that the

millennium, even in its full glory, shall be so sweeping that every soul shall be converted to God, but that "in every place," in all the cities and villages where men live, there shall be the pure worship of God,—even in the gentile and heathen world. This is prophecy.

We are standing by the side of a path crowded with a multitude, to us uncounted and countless. They are all hurrying one way—towards a dark passage under a mountain. Just at the opening, there is seen a solitary figure holding up a strong, bright light, by which you can just look through that dark passage, and see the dim outlines of a great and beautiful city beyond. Sometimes that figure looks strong and fresh, and then again feeble, pale, and almost ready to fall. For some reason or other, the multitudes try to put out that light—sometimes by stoning it, sometimes by pouring water upon it, sometimes by casting their own garments upon it; but suddenly, when they think it ready to expire, it breaks out again, and shines brighter than before, and the grasp of the hand upon that light is firmer, and the form of the figure more erect than ever.

And so, from the days of Abraham, has she stood—the Church of God,—outliving generations of men, and all forms of persecution. There she stands to-day, holding forth the lamp of life—the light of the world, with energies not only unimpaired, but renewed, and with responsibilities greatly increased.

In the experience of every man, there are duties and responsibilities and trials peculiar to each period of his life. So in the history of nations, it has ever been, and will continue to be, that as Time lifts up his curtain, each period in the life of a nation will have its own peculiar experience, trials, and duties.

And in the history of the Church of God, in each

period of the world, she has had a work to do peculiar to that period. She has, in our day, a work peculiar to this epoch. And to this I am now wishing to call the attention of the Fathers and Brethren before me, and announce as the subject of our meditations on this occasion, the thought that *The present is the propagating age of the Church, and that prophecy is our support in the work.*

Doubtless there were good men, and devout worshipers, before the call of Abraham; but so far as we know, there were no visibly organized church, no solemn ordinances, and no public worship. But the church was organized in Abraham, its ordinances confined to his family, and he was the appointed head of an organization in which all the families of the earth were to be blessed. And it is to be noticed, that while his seed was promised to be like the stars of heaven for multitude, for two generations after him, a single death might have extinguished the church.

Now what was the work and the responsibility of the Church under the Patriarchs, and during their era? Plainly to cherish and nurture the little germ of a mighty tree. There was no king, and the Patriarch must be the ruler; no priest, and he must be priest to instruct and offer sacrifices and prayer; no church edifice, and he must erect an altar under the open heavens, wherever he was; no city of habitation, and he must wander in tents,—the heir of the world, and yet have no “inheritance, no, not so much as to set his foot on.” He must live and die in the tent. How careful must he be to keep the germ alive,—to prevent the heathen from treading it under foot! There was no Bible in the world, and he must go directly to God himself to know his will. He had no staff on which to lean, but that of faith, and no hope

of the increase of the church, but in a distant future. The wealth of the patriarchs was in their cattle; their mansions were tents made of skins; their food, the plainest. They wandered for water, and were often driven to distress by famine. They had no responsibility but to keep the organization alive. That was all that they could do. It was the planting time, and the time for the little germ to take root.

The next period of the church was the Levitical, beginning with the bondage of Egypt—and the beginning of a great future history of all time. You may wonder how it was that in a few centuries they could become so ignorant, and sink so low, as to accept the most cruel bondage as their almost normal condition. But you must remember that during her sojourn in Egypt the church had no Sabbath, no Bible, no teaching Priest; everything to pull down and nothing to uplift. Sullen waves rolled over her for centuries. In the *best* circumstances there must be tares with the wheat—an Ishmael in Abraham's family—wicked sons in the houses of Eli and Samuel—and it is not till the great day, when the net is drawn to the shore, that the good *can* be separated from what is to be cast away. But what men of faith the church then produced! Jacob going down to Egypt to die, Joseph bequeathing his bones to the promised land, and the poor mother, a captive on the banks of the Nile, weaving her little ark of rushes, and twisting every flag with a prayer and moistening it with her tears!

The church had often to *descend* very low, before she could *ascend* far above all principalities. Her work *then* was to bow the neck, to suffer, to submit, just as we now do, when high and deep waves of sorrow roll in upon our families. The bondage was too heavy to be shaken off; the limbs were too stiff to make an effort, till the rod of Moses brought deliver-

ance. Many were the sorrows unwritten and unsung, and many the tears wrung by the hand of oppression; and many times it seemed that the last spark of faith, down among the cold ashes, was extinguished, and that the flame that burned on Abraham's altar could never again be rekindled. The church was lying on the burning coals of persecution—a hard duty; but great good must ever have its birth in the house of great sorrows. Then followed the school-days, when the church sat down before Sinai, received the Law, and the rites and ceremonies embodying great principles and great truths. The Levitical was the material age, when the child must be instructed by pictures, disciplined and corrected till ripe for something better.

The next great experience of the church was her training during the prophetical era, from Moses to Malachi, preparatory to a great manhood. How severe her discipline had to be; how restless, impatient, and rebellious she was under it; how many of her teachers were consumed in the contest, when God himself had often to interpose; what heavy chastisements as well as great deliverances she experienced during this prophetical period, I need not now relate. Mercies the greatest, and judgments the most fearful, were woven into her experience. Idolatry threw her fetters over her again and again, malice made war upon her, and the land of promise, for centuries, was the great battle ground between light and darkness, truth and error—the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. During this period, the church had to throw off the last links of her bondage, test her laws, separate herself from all other people, build the holy city and the holy temple, to be the beacon-light of the earth, and to develop a civilization and a religion that carried the imprint of their divine origin on their face. The prophets were an order of men peculiar in their

character and duties. The church was a trustee to receive from their hands the written Word, in which faith was to live and act, down to the end of time,—the principles and the image of a Person, and a work to be done by Him, in comparison with which all the past was to be the faintest twilight before the morning sun.

The Prophetical period was a very great advance upon the Levitical. The prophets brought out the spirituality of the law, showing the utter uselessness of circumcision, and sacrifices, and oblations, and rites, without a broken heart and a contrite spirit. No higher order of men have ever lived. "To obey," cried they, "is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." We have but fragments of their labors recorded, as they rebuked or roused the nation, as they gathered the dispersed, as they stood before kings, and made guilt to tremble. They stood alone, and worked alone. They now look to us like the old Roman water-ducts—made of great blocks of granite, broken and shattered indeed, but stretching from hill to hill, over rivers and plains and valleys, as if tossing their mighty arches high over the puny buildings gathered like pigmies at their feet—standing solitary and alone, from age to age, lofty in height, gigantic in proportions, unequalled ever, and even to this day conveying pure water to living men, incapable of appreciating their greatness, or the great blessings they convey.

The order of the Christian ministry is far more like that of the prophets, than like the Levitical priesthood. The priests were from one caste,—one tribe or family; the prophets were from any tribe, trade, or family. The priest had his allotted, measured routine of service; the prophet knew nothing of routine. Burn the temple and throw down the altar, and scatter the

people, and the duties of the priesthood were at an end. The prophet could follow the captives into distant lands, and there teach or prophesy, comfort or reprove—whether at Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, Sidon, or among the Moabites or Midianites. They were the spiritual teachers of the world, as Christian ministers are to-day. Oh, that we had their loftiness of character, their sublime faith, their uncompromising boldness, their burning zeal, and their heavenly spirit!

At length the prophetic epoch closed. The flower-bud was ready to open. The twilight of morning was to melt into day. The rising of the Star of Bethlehem was the signal that the swaddling bands of childhood were to be exchanged for the garments of manhood. The ancient costume was to drop off, and the real church was to be transferred and committed to the Christian dispensation. Rites and ceremonies were to be laid aside, while the ordinances, altered and adapted to the new circumstances, were to be retained. And now the church stood out, under her last, purest, simplest and most perfect dispensation. Midnight and early dawn were past and the day broke out clear. The angel of the sun could be distinctly seen. The voice of the last prophet had died away, and the last inspired man had laid down his pen, and the heavy, almost crushing responsibility of filling the earth with the religion of Christ, was laid upon the church. She was debtor to the Jew and to the Greek, to the bond and to the free. But the world was so entrenched in organic customs, so besotted by sin, that the task had been too much for her strength, as she grappled and wrestled with the idolatry of ages; the persecuting Sauls had been more than a match for the Stephens; the stone at the tomb had been too heavy for the daughters of Jerusalem to roll away; the Herods had cut off the heads of the Peters as well

as those of the Jameses; the prisons and the crosses had been too much for the infant church, had she not received superhuman aid.

Now follow, as under the old dispensation, *three* different eras. The first embraced the first three centuries, and the great work to be done during that period was *to settle the faith of the church*—to find out what real Christianity was, what was truth and what error, what was inspiration and what was human writing—to try the strength of the new religion in wrestling with the idolatry of the earth—idolatry yielding no place to Christianity, and Christianity having no fellowship with idolatry.

Then comes the second age—that of the union of church and state. Since the Son of God had come in the flesh, the church had felt the responsibility of making Christ's kingdom co-extensive with the earth. To do this, she counted not the life of her sons dear unto her. And finally, after wading in the blood of her martyrs, she so far conquered, that the power of the earth submitted to her, and the Roman empire crouched at her feet. But to gain this ascendancy, she had to put off her bridal robes, and clothe herself in those of worldly pomp and splendor. Her white vestments were taken from her, and she had to walk wrapped in silks, and be clothed in garments sparkling with the jewelry of earth, and to sleep under coverings heavy with gold. She who had slept and worshiped in tombs, and sang hymns in caves, was now brought into the palace and made to sit on cushions of down. She who had walked by faith with the Son of God in fires, now walked queen of the earth. The state now took the church of God under its protection,—the state to defend the church in her work, and the church to sanction and sanctify the doings of the state. In almost all parts of Christendom this sad union con-

tinues to the present hour. To carry out the bargain, schism and heresy in the church were made treason against the state, and rebellion against the state, excommunication by the church, from salvation. This union has cost the church the destruction of Christian liberty and the oppression of her conscience. The Inquisition was an engine invented to make the church a power on earth, by preserving her unity. The materialism of the idolatry of the world was rolled down upon the church, and well nigh buried her in a splendid grave. The world and the church agreed that it was so desirable that men should think alike, that they ought to be put to death if they thought at all. The Daughter of Zion thought she was leading the world to Christ, when she was only drying the flesh on her own bones, and reducing herself to a living mummy. The ends sought might have been good, but the mistake, as to the means to be used, was almost a fatal one.

Then came the recoil—which we call the Reformation. Among the rubbish which the world had heaped upon the church, Luther's great hand is feeling, till he lays it naked upon the Rock of Ages. The recoil of that one spirit rocked Europe. To undo the past, to cut free from the state, to reform the church, to educate the human mind to think, to discover the power of the press, to create the free school and the free church, to discover and invent all the instrumentalities needed, and to find the way to every part of the globe, has been a great part of the work which has since been done.

We are now in the third era of the Christian church—*the age of propagating the Gospel through the world*. And now, after all the experience of the church in the past, we find we have still the great work to do, as it was laid upon her by Christ himself. And we still

need a guiding, sustaining power. Where shall we find it?

In reviewing the experience of the church of God in all past ages, there has ever been *one* sustaining power—one guiding star. She has ever turned her eyes to the prophecies, and clung to those “exceeding great and precious promises,” and relied not on what she had done or could do, but on what God had promised to do for her and with her.

The first prophecy in human language,—the greatest, and, as I deem it, the most comprehensive,—was this: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”

If we understand this as Moses and as the church in all ages have understood it, we have a most remarkable prediction. If it be understood in any other way, Moses recorded nonsense over which a school-boy might blush. But he who could lead Israel out of their bondage; who could control and instruct that illiterate people for forty years; who could make and impose laws that would keep them separate from all other people for thousands of years; who could impress rites and ceremonies on them that last to this hour; who could give moral precepts so wide in their reach, and so perfect in their spirit, that if obeyed, universally, earth would be another Eden; who could write poetry, which for simple grandeur and sublimity of thought has never been exceeded; who could leave writings that will live and be fresh when the great pyramid of Cheops has mouldered back to dust, was neither a fool nor a weak man. He was the morning star among prophets, and this great, full, mysterious prediction, which he has recorded, has been like a strong staple on which the whole chain of prophecies has depended.

It has hung over the church a moral rainbow, spanning the earth through all time, speaking peace and good will to men, the pledge of mercy.

“Triumphant arch ! that fill’st the sky,
When storms prepare to part ;
I ask not proud Philosophy
To teach me where thou art !

“When o’er the green, undeluged earth,—
Heaven’s covenant,—thou didst shine,
Then came the world’s gray fathers forth
To watch thy sacred sign !

“How glorious is thy girdle, cast
O’er mountain, tower and town ;
Or mirrored in the ocean vast,
A thousand fathoms down !

“As fresh in yon horizon dark—
As young thy beauties seem,
As when the eagle from the ark,
First sported in thy beam !

“For faithful to his sacred page,
God still rebuilds thy span ;
Nor lets the type grow pale with age,
That first spoke peace to man ! ”

And since this record has been made, the church has been living and acting in the strength of prophecy. But what human governments have come up and made their experiments, sometimes almost grasping the whole world under a single dynasty, sometimes relying upon art and science, sometimes upon iron law, and sometimes upon the naked sword, to raise fallen humanity,—and all in vain ! Through all these experiments and changes, gigantic and often beautiful, the church has lived, her eye ever fixed on the great truth flashing out from the scroll which each prophet held in his hand, and on which was written, “God hath a kingdom on earth which is to

outlive all kingdoms, and in spirit and power is to swallow up all nations." No matter how dark the night was, the people of God knew a sun was to arise. No matter how the earth shook, faith lifted up her voice, "Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth;" and then, in the same breath, she shouted, "He maketh wars to cease unto the ends of the earth." Were the saints in distress, the earth sliding under their feet, the mountains carried into the midst of the sea, the waters thereof roaring? In these troubles they could sing, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved. God shall help her, and that right early." Were they almost cut off in their low estate? How beautiful were the worn and dusty feet of the messengers coming over the mountains, with their staff in their hand, and crying, "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people! Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned." The voice of the prophets rings out from the deep midnight, clear and emphatic, and full of hope. Sometimes this river of Zion seems very low, the waters almost dried up and gone, creeping along on the gravel among the stones; and then again they swell and fill all the channel, and sweep along deep and strong, filling the banks and reflecting the flowers that hang over them. But whether these waters were high or low, these holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, never had a doubt, or the shadow of a fear, lest the river would dry up, or fail to grow larger till it became 'A river that could be measured; a river to swim in; a river

that could not be passed over!’ Hence it was, that when the church was the lowest, her walls razed to the ground, her gates burned, and her children all carried away into captivity, then the holy seers broke out in the loudest strains of hope, of victory, and of final triumph. It sometimes seemed then, as it does now, as if the army of the Lord of Hosts was routed and was retreating, driven from the field; but it was only in appearance. It was only changing fronts in order to take a new and stronger position; to hasten on the hour of victory. When Hophni and Phinehas are slain, when Israel is smitten and the ark of God is taken by the Philistines, when the land is a widow because her children are slain, or in captivity in a strange land, with their harps hanging on the willows by the rivers of Babylon, even then there was not the shadow of a fear lest the strength of the prophecies would not sustain the church’s faith and courage. There never was a time when the harp of Zion did not sing of her future glory. Why, even David, old, feeble, worn out, soon to exchange time for eternity, wakes up that harp whose notes had rung in the caves of Engedi, in the glens of the mountains, and in the halls of the palace. His eye was dim, but he could see the king’s Son coming down upon the poor and needy like rain upon the mown grass; the mountains bringing peace to the people; kings bowing down to this Son; all people serving him; all nations calling him blessed;—a handful of corn scattered upon the mountains, whose fruit would shake like Lebanon. David was now to sing his last song, and utter his last prayer, ere the prayers of David, the son of Jesse, were ended,—ended in the exultation of hope and faith: “Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things; and

blessed be his glorious name forever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen. The prayers of David, the son of Jesse, are ended." He has no more to pray for—no more to desire. On the wings of the angel who carried that prayer to heaven, may he go up to the full visions of that world of which he was thus catching glimpses.

We are apt to feel that those old saints lived in a dark period of the world; but have the people of God ever shown a stronger faith than when through faith they "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, turned to flight the armies of the aliens; had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea moreover of bonds and imprisonment; they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, not accepting deliverance; they wandered in mountains and dens and caves of the earth;" these all, not having seen the fulfillment of the promises, died in faith, singing as they went onward—never discouraged, "we are seeking a country," and "He is leading us in the right way, that we may go to a city of habitation. We are living in the strength of prophecy." Oh! it makes one thrill to read over the eleventh chapter of Hebrews.

It sometimes meets us as a surprise, that the prophets, who saw and glowed over the ingathering of the gentiles, should have made no efforts to bring the gentiles in. Only one solitary missionary was sent to the heathen, and his reluctance to go came near costing him his life. The fact was, the Jewish church was a kind of close corporation, whose object was to

preserve true religion in the world without attempting to propagate it. During all these generations, the world might call the church "a failure;" but it was no failure; neither can the work of propagating the gospel in this latter day ever be "a failure;" and no one who comprehends the principles on which we act, will ever pronounce "missions a failure." We allow that being in the right line will not wholly prevent our making mistakes, or misjudging. We may have to feel our way as Moses did, by searching out the lands to be possessed; and we may mistake the time when the Vision calls us into Macedonia; or we may mistake as to means and instrumentalities, and we may at times have to retrace our steps; we may think we are near taking possession when the sons of Anak are first to be conquered. We may think we have made a discovery of great value, which proves useless; as when, for example, we once thought that we could find heathen youth from all nations wandering to our shores, whom we could catch and educate, trusting that the Holy Spirit would convert them, and then we could send them back, educated ministers. We now see the utter impossibility of thus raising up a native ministry without miracles; then we could not see it. But the great idea of raising up preachers and pastors from among the heathen was not a failure. It never went out of sight till it became a success. That the servants of God will be so infallible as never to make mistakes, is what we have no right to assume. We may make experiments that come to little. We are to live and labor in a day that is not clear nor dark,—not day in its brightness, nor night in its darkness,—but a mixture of both; but we hang our faith of success, not on the fact that we are always to move in a straight line, and never meet reverses, but on the great prophecies of the Bible, which can never fail, and

never allow any such thing as failure in our great work. We might just as well talk about "the failure" of God's plan to give the earth seed time and harvest, because we sometimes sow and reap little, or talk about "the ordinances of heaven" failing to be "settled" because we sometimes have an eclipse of a planet, or even of the sun himself. We gather wisdom from our ignorance, strength from our failures, and victory from our defeats.

Unhesitatingly we affirm that fewer mistakes have been made, less strength has been wasted,—less loss of material because unsuitable, fewer men coming short in mental or moral qualities, and therefore set aside,—than in any other department of human effort. Could a human government be carried on with no more defalcations, no more robberies and dishonesties among its servants, no greater mistakes made in selecting its agents, instead of calling that government "a failure," the nations would clap their hands over the millennium of politics.

But, brethren, by far the greatest work ever committed to or resting on men, still remains for us to do. The church has been carried through all the past, preserved and made strong for this very work. "The propagation of the Gospel is intrusted to human agency; and it has now become a part of our trial and discipline whether we will faithfully discharge the trust."

It seems to me there are two great alternatives on which the future of the church in this land depends; first, whether she is to sit down and let the world, in its fashions, its love of display, its money-greediness and mammon-service, bury her outright and crush the vital spirit of the gospel out of her, and thus she die of the surfeits of appetite, and be folded in a silken shroud; or, secondly, whether she will meet the

responsibilities of the day, and "go and preach the gospel to every creature" under heaven. The one question implies her turning back to the leeks and onions of Egypt; the other her driving out heathenism and making the heathen into Christians. On this question, too, may hang the fate of our country. If this be not the great object for which God has planted this nation, what will be her mission or history beyond many nations now buried? I cannot but hope that a nation, that has never persecuted the saints,—never driven two thousand humble ministers into poverty and banishment in a single day,—which can point to no St. Bartholomew's day, when the blood of martyrs reddened mighty rivers, no Smithfields, where holy men were burned, no Inquisition, which did its work of hell too far under ground to have its groans heard by mortal ears,—I say, I cannot but hope that such a nation will be honored to be a co-worker with God for humanity. We are living with a generation full of property, fashion, luxuries. Shall we live to enjoy these, or shall we use them to God's glory? And we *must* make this decision, because, out of the deep gloom of fallen humanity comes the piercing wail of distress.

So far as we have done anything in this cause, we have evidence of the Divine approval, hardly to be made more manifest, should the archangel thrust his trumpet out of the arch of heaven and blow approbation into our ears.

Human wisdom has often sought to make the earth place the crown of glory on the head of Jesus by other means than going directly to the soul and working on that. It has attempted to do it by painting, by sculpture, by architecture, by the genius of art, by education; and also, by the persecutions of the Inquisition,—but in vain. The only two forces on which

we can rely, are those of Faith and Love. Other charities, such as aiding a city that has been wrapped in a sheet of fire, or feeding a people gnashing their teeth in a famine, are only occasional and temporary; and we may safely trust to the ordinary impulses of humanity to meet such cases; but the great charity of earth, is to give the Bread of heaven to all people; and this charity, and its implied efforts, like that river that flows from under the altar of God, must flow in summer and in winter. Silver and gold we do not send to the heathen; civilization, and worldly things, will drop from the wings of the angel as he flies to proclaim the everlasting gospel to every people; but that is only incidental. We want to lift high the cross of Christ, and get the world to look at that cross for hope and salvation from sin. Anything greater than this is too great for men; anything less is a mockery of human woe.

We see what was the great aim and end of having so large a part of God's revelation to men in the form of prophecy. It was plainly to meet a want in our weak nature—that we must have something to which we can look forward—and therefore the prophets were made to hang over the church like a great cloud of witnesses. We, the people of God, in some ages must endure trials, persecutions, imprisonment, and martyrdom. In other ages we must labor and pray and deny ourselves; but we cannot do all this, without having something great before us. When the little flock take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and count not their lives dear unto them, they want to feel, and they *do* feel, that this kingdom for which they now suffer and toil, is to become the great power of earth, and the great glory of heaven. Steadily and calmly do the pilgrims tread their way over thorns, seeking a country, and trying to leave an

influence behind that will long outlive them. The great Seer of the church, Isaiah, does not have to wait ages and generations before the light of the Star of Bethlehem breaks upon him. What a shout!—"Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls salvation, and thy gates praise. Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself, for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous; they shall inhabit the land forever; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation. I the Lord will hasten it in his time."

If, when Isaiah thus sang, and if to-day, when we labor and pray, there was no future time promised when such a Light is to arise, when the Redeemer shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, when the heathen are to be given him for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession, what *could* Faith live upon? As we looked forward, the eye could see nothing but gloom and midnight darkness, and the ear could hear nothing but the sobbings of lost souls in eternity.

It is these hopes, created by prophecy, that rouse, and nerve the church to lay her precious sons and daughters on the altar of God, consecrating them to the work of living and dying among the heathen, that they may preach Christ Jesus in the dark places of the earth, now full of the habitations of cruelty.

While the earth, to others, is rolling in her silence, we hear voices, loud as mighty thunderings—loud as the voice of many waters—saying, “Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” Prophecy affords the nervous power of the church, and grievously do they mistake and misread their Bible who look upon the prophets as belonging to former ages of the world, or to a different church. As long as the heavy responsibility of preaching the gospel to every creature under heaven rests upon the church, she will need the strength of prophecy wrought into her faith. The Holy Spirit is helping our infirmities when he enters our hearts and creates love and gratitude, and he was no less working for us when he entered the prophet’s heart, and caused him to shout over the triumphs of the church, not even now achieved. If they without us could not be made perfect, neither can we without them. The golden chain of faith created and made bright in their hands, binds us to our duties, and keeps us to our responsibilities, and we are strong by contact with it.

At this day of propagation, we begin to have close fellowship with Christ in his sufferings. And when God awakens his people to pray fervently, it is because he intends to answer their prayers. When the Spirit quickens them to work, it is because he intends to work with them in their attempts to save men, and will give success to their efforts. We feel sure, that all over the globe, earnest prayer is going up to heaven for the conversion of the world; and I think it not arrogance to say, that at this hour more acceptable prayer is ascending to God in the English tongue than in all the rest of the languages spoken on his footstool. And if in the darkness of night we could see the pathway of angels as they fly to minister to the

humble laborers, scattered in the different parts of the earth, I doubt not the whole concave of heaven would be luminous with glory. And every minister of Christ yearns to have every one of his flock, man, woman and child, rich and poor, bring his sympathies into this joy of our Lord—the joy of seeing the lost recovered.

You will notice that the prophets, in predicting the conversion of the nations to God, do not mention the printing press, the steam engine, the free school, nor any of the thousand instrumentalities which the church is using for that end. They see chiefly the results—the end. It was of little consequence to them whether the event on which they were fixing their eye was near or remote; perhaps they themselves did not know. The time when Christ should come was the only one about which they inquired and searched diligently. But they saw men running to and fro, and knowledge increased, as we now see. They saw the hills brought low, and the valleys exalted, and an highway made for our God, though railroad cars, crossing a continent, are not named. They saw simple dromedaries, not then known as cars and steamboats. They saw old Lebanon bringing his glory, and the isles of the ocean and the waving palm-tree bringing their share of praise and incense, and a pure offering unto God, going up from every place under heaven.

How many plans, great, fair, ingenious, and almost God-like, have men formed, by which to aid and lift up fallen humanity; and how soon they have sunk away in oblivion, under their own weight. Philosophy, and human reason, and keen sagacity, have tried hard to raise the world up into light and blessedness; laboring, hoping, and contriving; and then leaving the world no better than they found it. At this day, how many schemes, wild, puerile, ruinous to the social

fabric, are disseminated by every possible means, in the hope of finding some shorter, easier, more pleasant way by which to bless and recover our race, than to walk in "the old paths," and preach the gospel of individual repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. How many are going up their watch-towers, and most earnestly watching to see if the day of earth's redemption is not breaking. All in vain! God uses these plans and efforts as his wisdom sees best, to bring out his own greater and wiser plans; but after all, the problem is too great for men to solve; the load is too heavy for men to lift. There is only one plan that is divine, only one charity that embraces eternity in its reach, only one system of toil that is sure to succeed.

That gospel of our dear Saviour, planned in the counsels of eternity, proclaimed in Eden, fore-shadowed in the Tabernacle, promised all the way through the Old Testament, brought fully out in the New Testament, suited to the philosopher and to the poor darkened heathen man, destined to fill the earth with faith and hope, and heaven with songs of joy, calling out the loudest song of angel and redeemed saint, which can create a love in the soul which many waters cannot quench, which sorrow and persecution only increase, which can make age run without weariness and walk without faintness, which can make the chambers of death the dressing room of the spirit, which is and ever has been the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, Jew or Gentile,—that gospel of our dear Saviour, must and will spread and fill the earth with the glory of God.

O men! men! your plans, and gains, and honors look large to you, do they? Interests which grow and decay with time, and are bounded by earth, seem great to you, do they? I tell you earth is never to

see but one thing really great. It is the coming of a day so bright and glorious that the light of sun and moon will seem dim, so extended that the universe will rejoice in its splendor, so blessed that the employments and the riches and honors of earth will seem as ashes. The sun that creates that day is the Sun of Righteousness. And now, with desires that burn and reach into eternity, with the opportunity of doing for men that which will bring them into the love of Jesus and carry them with you into heaven, will you sit down idle, or hoard, or waste your property, or idolize the dust of earth; or will you lay yourselves and all that you have on the altar of God, a living sacrifice, and feel that it is your reasonable service?

O Brethren! the holy Prophets meet us to-night, and tell us of a day when incense and a pure offering shall be made in every place under heaven, when the Prince of Peace shall begin his long, long, blessed reign, when he shall call, and many sons and daughters shall return and come to Zion, with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads.

O glorious triumph of redeeming love! O glorious Captain of human salvation! Faithful and True Witness, thou art worthy to wear many crowns on thy head!

No wonder the hills and the mountains break forth into singing, and the trees clap their hands for joy, and angels and saints in light break out together in the song, "Worthy is the Lamb." That song shall rise higher and higher to all eternity. Yes! and all of us, the humble Christian now unknown, and the hard-working pastor at home, and the self-denying missionary abroad, as we toil and thrill under the words of prophecy, as we take hold of the hand, and feel the warm breath of the old prophets, and go up

with them into their watch-tower, feel sure that we now see the purple light of the latter day, and feel the wires of earth beginning to vibrate with the Jubilee of heaven, and can almost hear the last great song of time, just as the earth sinks into the fires of the last day,—“Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!”